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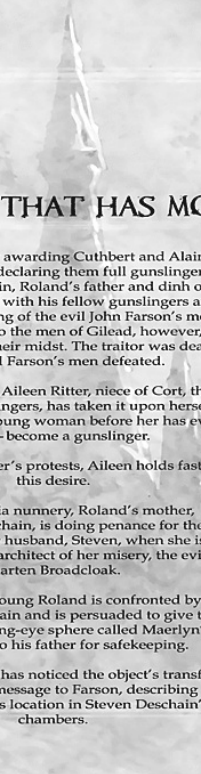
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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

After officially awarding Cuthbert and Alain their guns and declaring them full gunslingers, Steven Deschain, Roland's father and dink of Gilead, rode out with his fellow gunslingers and intercepted a gang of the evil John Farson's men. Unbeknownst to the men of Gilead, however, a traitor was in their midst. The traitor was dealt with and Farson's men defeated.

Back in Gilead, Aileen Ritter, niece of Cort, the trainer of gunslingers, has taken it upon herself to do what no young woman before her has ever done—become a gunslinger.

Despite her father's protests, Aileen holds fast to this desire.

In the Debaria nunnery, Roland's mother, Gabrielle Deschain, is doing penance for the betrayal of her husband, Steven, when she is visited by the architect of her misery, the evil Marten Broadcloak.

Meanwhile, young Roland is confronted by Cuthbert and Alain and is persuaded to give the dangerous seeing-eye sphere called Maerlyn's Grapefruit to his father for safekeeping.

However, a spy has noticed the object's transfer and sends a message to Farson, describing the Grapefruit's location in Steven Deschain's chambers.

They say there's folks of the world and in the world. Truth t'tell, I can't entirely recollect which one is the good one. But whichever one it is, Roland's the other.

There on the firing range, Alain and Cuthbert are busy yammering away about how Roland did the right thing turning the Grapefruit over to his father...

...and then about the impending feast and the types of guns they're going to be awarded. The true guns of a gunslinger, not the clumsy barrel-shooters they're currently using.

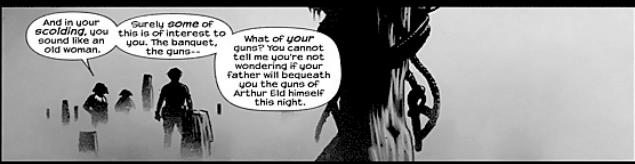
They babble on about the history of the respective firearms. About how Alain will be using his grandfather's guns while Cuthbert, well, he's using his great-uncle's that date back to the time of Arthur Eld.

And through it all, Roland just stands there like none of it matters. That the world they're living in is only of the most passing interest to 'im.

And finally he says--

Enough.
You prattle like children.
Like girls.
Like girl children.
No more.





And in your scolding, you sound like an old woman.

Surely *some* of this is of interest to you. The banquet, the guns--

What of *your* guns? You cannot tell me you're not wondering if your father will bequeath you the guns of Arthur Eld himself this night.



I not only *can* tell you that...

...but I *am* telling you that.

Enemies surround us. Farson plots against us. Who knows what treachery lurks within our very walls?

I don't give a damn about ceremonies or guns' origins.



All that matters is what happens when I aim and fire.

His shots fly straight and true, and for a time the only sound is the thundering echo of the gun's retorts.

And then...



What about *seating* at the banquet? Can we discuss *seating*?

Alain, perhaps *you* cannot take a hint, but Roland's made it clear to *me* that--



It involves girls.

So what? That doesn't matter.

Why should it matter?

...
How does it involve girls?



Typically
new gunslingers
are seated at the
head table...

...next to the
prospective bride
selected by their
father.

Bride! For
God's sake, I'm
fifteen! When do
I get to plant my
mad barley?

Sow
your wild
oats?

Right!
That!

Tragically, our
youthful "farming"
needs aren't
considered.



What do you
mean "our," Alain?
You wouldn't know
what to do with a girl
if you fell on her. In
fact, it's speculated
your ignorance stems
from lack of
inter--



You shut
your lying mouth!
I'm plenty
interested!

O-ho! I
think I hit
a nerve!

With your
aim? Fat
chance!

Alain! Bert!
Did I sound as if
I was *jesting*
when I said
"enough?"

He
started
it!



And now
I'm finishing
it.



All right.
Fine.

You get off
lucky this day,
Alain.

So say
you.

And Roland...
are you *certain*
you wish to leave this
topic behind, considering
I've not told you who
your father has seated
at *your* side?

The ghost of
Susan Delgado will
be *eternally* at my
side. I need no other
company.

Well, your father
has more earthly
concerns, apparently.
Which is why *Aileen* will
be supping with you
this evening.



Aileen?!
That girl in boy's
clothing?

Be quiet,
Bert.

I will not,
Alain! This has
Cort's handprints
all over it. He wants
his niece *safe*
within the house
of Eld.

There is *no*
safety in this
world. Not in *our*
house or any
other.

Aileen's made
little secret of
her interest in me
over the years. Cort
would strike off his
right hand before he
bound her to someone
she didn't love. That
is *his* priority, just
as my *father's* is
to make a worthy
match.

And what of *your* priorities, Roland? I respect your devotion to Susan's memory, but you have to move on eventually--

Do I? Am I to *forget* her? To treat her as I would a wound that scabs over and leaves naught but a faint white scar, easily overlooked?

My father's intentions--Aileen's feelings--*none* of that matters, Bert. Let it play out as it will.

As for me, the only woman I would *ever* have married-- that I ever will love-- was reduced to cinders, tied to the Charyou tree.



And in her death throes, when you or I would have been hurling profanities at the heavens...

...she cried out her love for me. To *forget* that would be to betray her, and I'll not betray one that I love, and who loved me in return.

Not only am I *unable* to move on, my friend...

...I have no *desire* to. Ever.



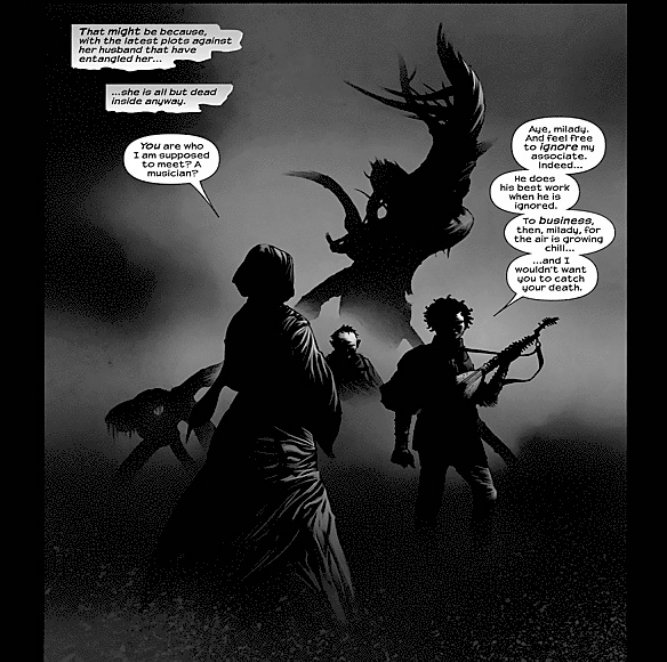


There ain't no doubt in my mind that when Roland's talking about betraying loved ones...

...it's his mother that's foremost on his mind.

In the woods a distance from the Great Hall, as the evening's shadows lengthen...

...Gabrielle Peschain stands as motionless as one dead.



That might be because, with the latest plots against her husband that have entangled her...

...she is all but dead inside anyway.

You are who I am supposed to meet? A musician?

Aye, milady. And feel free to ignore my associate. Indeed...

He does his best work when he is ignored.

To business, then, milady, for the air is growing chill...

...and I wouldn't want you to catch your death.



Take this gift,
courtesy of your
beloved Marten
Broadcloak...

...and my uncle,
the Good Man, John
Farson.

Have a care
with the blade. It is
coated with a deadly
poison. The slightest
scratch, and the world
will be deprived of
your beauty. A truly
tragic--

Save your
platitudes. They
impress me not
and prove only how
enamored you
are of your own
voice.

Let us
discuss what
business we
have.



My thanks for
shutting up my verbose
companion's empty
poetries, milady. To
business, then:

Your husband has
an object of great value
that belongs to the Good
Man. A glass sphere. He's
locked it away in a safe
in his study.

Behind a
painting? Aye, I
know the one.

You need to
steal the key and
have it ready when
required. Can
you?

If need
be.

It does
indeed need be.
And when the Good
Man himself comes to
collect it, then your
actions will be duly
rewarded.



*She shudders when he
says that. No doubt that
her due reward is the thing
she fears the most.*

Meanwhile, within the sheltered halls of Gilead, the riddle master is hard at work.

Now there are some who simply equate riddles with jokes. But to those who know--who truly know and respect what goes into quality conundrums--riddles are no laughing matter.



No, my friends, they are serious business. And no one takes 'em more serious than the riddle master.



Abel Vannay, Vannay the Wise, the young gunslingers' philosophy teacher.

Bringing all his considerable knowledge to bear on crafting the best possible riddles for the upcoming competition. And finally he utters a single word:



There.

All the riddles secure and locked away, are they, Vannay?



You know they are, Cort.

Going to give me a challenge this year?



I'll do my best, old friend. But I have very *little* doubt that, as always, *you* shall emerge triumphant.

Aye. You're likely right. What can I say? No point in the playing if one doesn't win.

Well then. It appears we have a classic *conundrum*. After all--



--a game cannot have £20 winners.

The main illustration shows a man with dark, curly hair and a wide-brimmed hat, wearing a dark, textured tunic and a belt. He is holding a guitar over his shoulder and a lion's head in his right hand. He stands in a dark, cave-like setting with rocky walls. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the lion's head.

Kingson is the name, by the by, and music my game. But I excel in riddles, and I did *not* come here to lose.

Really? Well, then why *did* you come here?

Ahhhha ha ha. A *worthy* jest. But then, you've had far many more years than I to practice jibes. Many, many, *many* years.

Are you calling me *aged*, young man?

Your face and body do that, old man. I merely label what is before me. And perhaps...



The bottom illustration shows two men in a dark, cave-like setting. On the left, a man with dark hair and a wide-brimmed hat, wearing a dark tunic, is looking towards the right. On the right, an older man with a balding head and a dark tunic is looking back at him. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting their faces and the texture of their clothing.

...perhaps it is time for a young *lion* to *thin* the herd.

The old lion *welcomes* the challenge.



So *that* was our new court musician. Do an old friend a favor, Cort. Step on that little pissant in the competition.

You *dislike* him?

I do not *trust* him. Why, do *you*?

Not in the least.



It is wise not to trust the untrustworthy.

I suspect if it were not for the letter of recommendation from Charles Champignon, he would not have been allowed to set foot within the castle walls.

Has anyone actually *seen* Charles of late?

I know I have not.



Hmmmm.

Later, old friend. I just *remembered* something I left in the hall.

Do I need to worry that you're going to try and examine the riddles?

Do you believe I would?



I believe you would slit the throat of *anyone* who tried to cheat, including your own.

You believe *correctly*.

You would not think that a man as big as Cort could move noiselessly when he chooses to.

Turns out he can.

A little fact that the so-called "Kingson" don't know. Which is why, as he busily switches out Vannay's bag of riddles for his own...



...he's unaware of the silent witness to his cheating--

--and the jeopardy in which his throat now finds itself.

Balls! Why would Charles recommend this little bastard?



*Got a confession here:
this is the part of the
story I least wanted to
share with you.*

*Poor Charles. Poor, tragic
Charles. And I can hear ya
saying, "What?" More tragic
than Susan?*



*And I say "Aye."
Aye, he is.*

Was.

*For right to the
end, they didn't
break Susan.*



*They broke Charles.
Or rather, not they.*

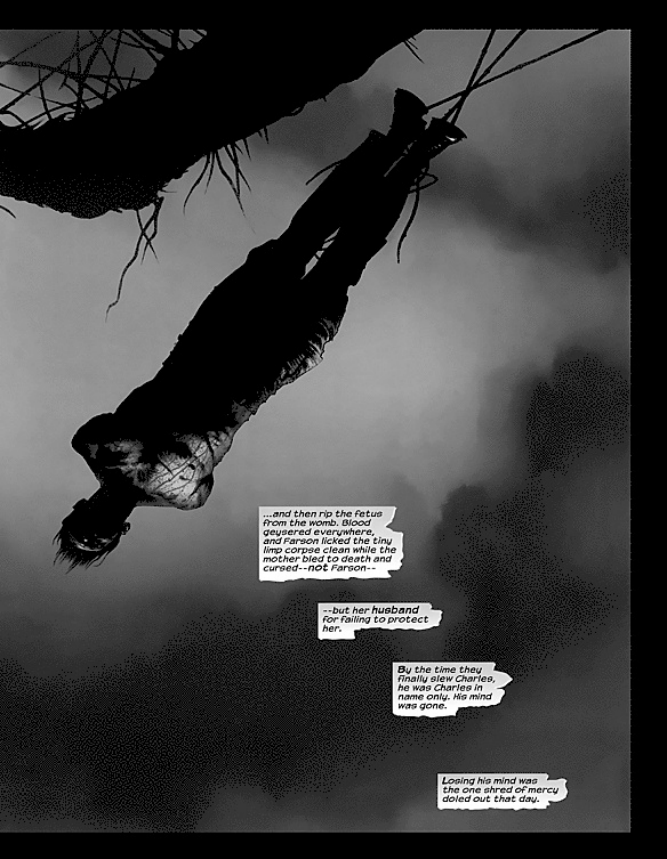
Him.

John Farson.

John Farson captured
Charles and his wife, and
before he killed Charles...

...he made him watch
Farson's men rape
Charles' pregnant
wife...



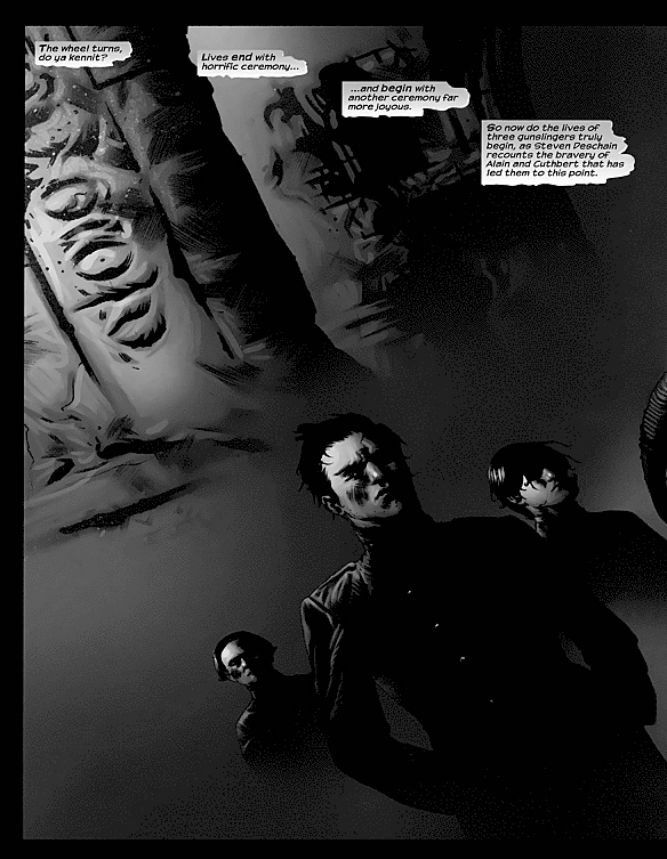


...and then rip the fetus
from the womb. Blood
geysered everywhere,
and Farson licked the tiny
limp corpse clean while the
mother bled to death and
cursed--not Farson--

--but her husband
for failing to protect
her.

By the time they
finally slew Charles,
he was Charles in
name only. His mind
was gone.

Losing his mind was
the one shred of mercy
doled out that day.



The wheel turns,
do ya kennit?

Lives end with
horrific ceremony...

...and begin with
another ceremony far
more joyous.

So now do the lives of
three gunslingers truly
begin, as Steven Deschain
recounts the bravery of
Alain and Cuthbert that has
led them to this point.



And last, but
not least, the actions
of my son, Roland, in
service to Gilead have
prompted me to
resolve thus:

He has earned
the guns of Eld, the
very weapons that
have served me well
and will *continue*
to do so...

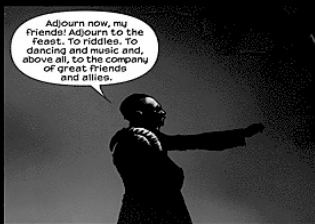


...until, upon my
eventual demise,
the guns of Eld--along
with the horn of Eld and
the title of dinh--will
be passed on to
him.

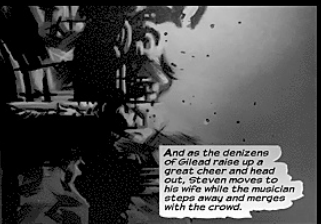
*Steven doesn't notice that,
upon mention of his passing,
the court musician smiles and
then whispers softly into
Gabrielle's ear as she turns
a bit ashen.*



*But Roland, he
notices. Oh yes,
he does.*



Adjourn now, my
friends! Adjourn to the
feast. To riddles. To
dancing and music and,
above all, to the company
of great friends
and allies.



*And as the denizens
of Gilead raise up a
great cheer and head
out, Steven moves to
his wife while the musician
steps away and merges
with the crowd.*



My lady,
wife. Welcome
home.

Thank you
for allowing
my return.

You *belong* at
my side, Gabrielle.
Will you join me for
a dance later this
evening?

I would
not miss it
for all the
world.

I will be
along directly. I
am so overwhelmed
with emotion that
I need to...to...

Compose
yourself?

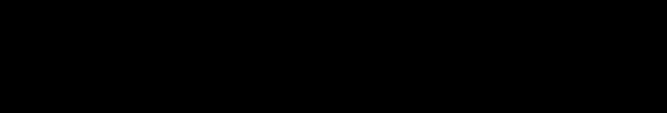
Just so.

Of course,
my love. Take
all the time you
require.





In an empty hallway, Gabrielle sags against the wall, weeping silently.



How
now, pretty
lady? Why all
the tears?



You would
not want your
beloved Marten
Broadcloak, or my
beloved uncle, to
think your resolve
is *wavering*,
would you?

N-no,
I...would
not.



Have
you the
dagger?

Aye.



Then,
when you and
your husband are
together as man
and wife...

Use it.
Use it with the
knowledge that,
in the eyes of
Marten and the
Good Man, you
are loved.

And theirs
are the *only*
eyes that
matter.

TO BE CONTINUED

**REGICIDE
POISON GARDENS
AND THE TRAINING
OF APPRENTICE
GUNSLINGERS**

**I:
THE RED KING'S
GARDEN**

As every Mid-Worlder knows, of all the weapons used to commit regicide, none has been as frequently turned to – or as successfully exploited – as poison. According to numerous historical documents, Arthur Eld, the ancient king of All-World, survived nineteen different poisoning attempts, many of which were orchestrated by traitorous, or overly ambitious, members of his own court. By all accounts, Arthur Eld was extremely lucky. He had an unusually strong constitution and the unswerving loyalty of hundreds of tasters willing to die to protect their king. And as the surviving accounts of that time show, many of those tasters did make that ultimate sacrifice. But unfortunately, the many dinhs who followed Arthur Eld were not so lucky, and trustworthy chefs became as important as loyal guards. In the years following the Eld's death, many new poisons found their way into Mid-World, and one way or another, they all seemed to be destined for Gilead's central castle.

According to Mid-World legend, deep in the heart of End-World, not far from the Dark Tower itself, the agents of the Outer Dark maintain a beautiful garden. This garden is full of gorgeous flowers, exotic

hanging mosses, tall ornamental grasses, beautiful fruit trees, and strangely colored fungi. All who claim to have seen it swear that it is a garden fit for a king . . . or at least a garden suited to the tastes of a very unusual king. For what all of these growing things have in common – other than their spectacular beauty – is their toxicity.

This legendary garden is supposed to be located in a walled courtyard within the stronghold of Le Casse Roi Russe, the Castle of the Crimson King. Although the individual plants are chosen by the Red King himself, the magicians who tend them have one goal in mind: to cross-breed their master's strains to create ever more vigorous poisons. The ultimate purpose of these poisons is to kill both the gunslingers of Gilead and their Affiliation allies, and by so doing, throw Mid-World into chaos.

What makes the Red King's concoctions even more dangerous than the murderous liquors and treacherous powders prepared by ordinary apothecaries, rat catchers, and assassins is that the Crimson King's servants are artists. Their poisons are complicated recipes, combining numerous ingredients which disguise each other, or which delay the onset of the complicated sets of symptoms for up to five days. Many of these concoctions have little scent or taste, and so are difficult to identify before ingestion or inhalation takes place. Since the Red King's specialty is slow-acting poison, not even animal tasters guarantee drug-free food, since it may take several days before the toxins begin to attack the taster's internal organs. On occasion, the Red King's men have used poisons which are harmless to animals but lethal to humans, in this way circumventing the problem of animal tasters.

Another trademark of the Red King's assassination technique is the devious way in



which his poisons reach their mark. His followers have added sweet-smelling but deadly substances to the fragrant oils which gunslingers' wives use to scent their hair. Delicate but toxic petals have been suspended in the honey used to flavor the icing on young apprentices' cakes. A single seed from one of the Red King's apples has been tossed into a perfectly fine vat of graf, transforming it into a delicious toxin potent enough to kill a hundred warriors.

Yet while the Red King's successes are startling in their audacity and cleverness, the gunslingers are not powerless against these attacks. Foreseeing the threat posed to his newly formed court, the Eld himself oversaw the planting of a most unusual hidden garden. Located on top of a locked and guarded tower, under a dome of glass, is a nursery which could rival the one said to be nurtured by the Crimson King himself. On the floors below this domed enclosure of green is a vast laboratory where highly trained apothecaries research cures for whatever new toxins the Red King releases into the world. On occasion, great discoveries are made this way, since sometimes a substance used to poison can - under different circumstances - also be used to cure.

Few of Gilead's citizens know that this tower and garden exist, and even fewer have seen it. Yet before he wins his guns, each gunslinger apprentice must visit this garden with his teacher Vannay, and successfully identify each poisonous plant, its noxious effects, and its possible treatments. In numerous instances, an inability to memorize the hundred or so toxic plants in Gilead's poison garden has delayed a gunslinger taking his test of manhood. In several instances, this delay has lasted years.

II: THE APPRENTICES' LIST OF POISONS

What follows is a partial list of the poisons which every gunslinger apprentice must memorize before he is allowed to meet Cort in the square yard and take his all-or-nothing test to win his guns. Although the list is long and the memorization of it is arduous, it is a task well worth undertaking since the knowledge gleaned from it has saved more than one gunslinger's life.

A. PLANT-BASED POISONS

1. DEADLY NIGHTSHADE/ BELLADONNA

Common Names: Belladonna, devil's herb, love apple, sorcerer's cherry, murderer's berry, dwaleberry, devil's cherry, witch's berry, great morel

How it grows: Deadly Nightshade is a branching herbaceous perennial that can grow up to five feet tall. It has oval-shaped leaves and dull purple, bell-shaped flowers with five sepals. The flowers are lightly scented. The fruit is a single berry that turns shiny black or deep purple once it rip-

ens. It is approximately 1/2 inch in diameter when full size. Since the berries are sweet, the seeds are often spread through animal droppings. A variant of this plant has pale yellow flowers and a pale yellow fruit. All parts of the deadly nightshade are poisonous to humans.

History: During the time of Arthur Eld, court ladies would sometimes place drops of nightshade in their eyes to dilate their pupils and to give those windows to the soul a bright, glistening appearance. If a salve is prepared from this plant and then is rubbed into the skin, it can give the sensation of flying through the air. Some people believe that rubbing nightshade salve on the skin allows the user to travel todash. This plant is sacred to Mid-World's death gods.

Administering as Poison: Two to five nightshade berries can kill a child; ten to twenty can kill an adult. A single leaf of this plant can kill a strong, grown man. Powdered nightshade can be added to corn meal. Liquors and grafs can be made deadly by adding a nightshade infusion. Berries can be added to pies since they have a sweet taste. According to Affiliation sources, John Farson's soldiers sometimes administer nightshade to prisoners in order to confuse them. Because of the hallucinations that occur when belladonna is ingested, such prisoners are often tricked into giving false confessions and are then executed.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Symptoms include dilated pupils, light sensitivity, blurred vision, tachycardia, inability to urinate or sweat, staggering, rash, headache, confusion, slurred speech, hallucination, delirium, and convulsions. Since the juice of the belladonna berry stains the skin dark

purple, inspect lips and mouth for discoloration.

Treatment: Induce vomiting; give the victim charcoal tablets to swallow.

Medicinal Uses: Anti-spasmodic for those who have inhaled poisons and whose cannot breathe; an anesthetic to be used only in the utmost need, since the sleep it induces can lead to death.

2. DEATH LILY

Common Names: Death Camas, Elegant Death Camas, Clannah Lily (subspecies)

How it grows: The Death Lily is an erect perennial which grows on dry meadows and grassy hillsides. Its long stem measures between eight and twenty inches. The leaves are grass-like; the flowers are in a terminal, spike-like cluster. The lily's petals are white or cream colored and the plant flowers continuously between spring and late summer. The bulbs are oval and are covered with blackish scales.

History: Traditionally, the Death Lily is used to poison livestock, but in recent years it has been used to kill humans as well.

Administering as Poison: All parts of this plant are extremely toxic. One bulb, raw or cooked, can kill a grown man. The Clannah Lily (a subspecies of the Death Lily) is the most poisonous of all. Its flowers smell like honey and so its petals are often used to poison sweet foods or ales. After ingesting, death can occur in several hours or several days, depending upon the dose administered.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Symptoms include excessive salivation, frothing at the nose and mouth, nausea, vomiting, muscular weakness, slowed breathing, pupil dilation,



slowing of heart, lowered blood pressure, coma, and death. The petals of the Clannah Lily torment victims with abdominal cramps which inevitably lead to death.

Treatment: Induce vomiting, give the victim charcoal tablets to swallow, give saline cathartics.

Medicinal Uses: None.

3. CURARE

Common Names: Woorara, ourari

How it grows: Curare is made from the bark of the woody vine known as *strychnos toxifera*.

History: Curare is deadly when it penetrates the skin but is harmless when eaten. Hence, it was used by early hunters as an arrow poison.

Administering as Poison: Poison is made by combining young bark scrapings with snake venom or dried and crushed venomous ants. This mixture is boiled in water for two days and then strained. What is left is a dark, bitter paste. Potency is tested by pricking a frog with a tainted needle and seeing how many leaps it can make before dying. Curare can be used to coat arrow tips, swords, knives, or blow darts. A bird poisoned with curare can survive two minutes. A grown man will survive for twenty.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Curare must be delivered through a cut or wound. Those poisoned with curare die by asphyxia, since the poison paralyzes the chest muscles and the lungs cease to work. Unfortunately, the victim remains awake and aware throughout the progression of paralysis, and so is not spared any of the poison's horrors.

Treatment: If artificial respiration can be performed throughout the ordeal, the victim will survive.

Medicinal Uses: Controlling convulsions, muscle relaxant.

4. DEVIL GRASS:

Common Names: Weed

How it grows: Devil grass is a rough, grey-green grass that grows in wastelands. It is the first growth to appear on ruined ground and the last to disappear once that ground becomes toxic. It is an hallucinogen as well as a toxin.

History: In Mid-World's wastelands and deserts, devil grass is often used for fuel. However those who have burned it maintain that devils dance in the greasy flames and those demons try to draw the watcher into the fire. Alcoholics too poor to buy liquor or graf often smoke weed, though smoking weed often leads to chewing weed and chewing weed results in death.

Administering as Poison: Since devil grass is an addictive narcotic, those who die from devil grass poisoning are usually long-time addicts.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Devil grass addicts don't want to do anything but chew weed. Hence they often suffer from malnutrition and dehydration. Their teeth tend to be green-coated and their sweat smells like rot.

Treatment: Detoxification. The addict must not be allowed access to weed. He or she must be given plenty of water and saline cathartics. However, if weed has been used for more than a month, liver and kidney damage may be irreversible.

Medicinal Uses: None.

B. TOXIC FUNGI

In the hands of John Farson's many assassins, poisonous toadstools are a potent weapon. Although not all fungi are toxic, those that are deadly kill by destroying the liver. By the time symptoms appear, major irreversible damage has already occurred.

1. DESTROYING ANGEL

Common Names: Death Angel

How it grows: Death Angel is a large white mushroom that appears in late spring and summer. It can be found in woodland, cleared fields, or anywhere else that rotting organic matter can be found. This toadstool is white, sometimes tinged with brown or gray, though the color changes as it ages. It is six to eight inches tall and its cap can be up to five or six inches in diameter. Below the gills, on the stout stem, is a filamentous skirt. If you dig around the base of the mushroom, you will find a mass of mycelium that is roughly the size of a small crab apple. When young, this toadstool closely resembles many varieties of edible mushroom.

History: Since young Destroying Angel toadstools closely resemble other non-toxic mushrooms, they are frequently added to food by assassins, or are accidentally ingested by unwary mushroom gatherers.

Administering as Poison: Since one small Destroying Angel is enough to kill a grown man, this toadstool can be added to food.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Initial symptoms occur six to eight hours after ingestion. These include stomach cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea. Although these symptoms soon pass, the toxins continue to work within the body. Within 48 hours, severe kidney and liver damage have occurred.

Treatment: There is no known treatment. However, if the mushroom can be identified immediately, induce vomiting. If several hours have elapsed, take carbon tablets, milk thistle extract, and drink plenty of water. If only a small amount of this mushroom was eaten, the victim may survive.

Medicinal Uses: None.

2. DEATH CAP

Common Names: Kiss of Death Mushroom

How it grows: Death Cap is a large mushroom. When it first emerges from the forest floor it is covered with a thin veil and smells like honey. Over time, the round top flattens and the veil becomes a floppy skirt just below the cap, and the white gills are free. The top of the Death Cap can be white, yellow, or olive green. The mature mushroom has a diameter of up to six inches. The

Death Cap's most distinguishing feature is its thick, swollen, ragged-looking base. However this is often covered by leaf litter.

History: The Death Cap is a beautiful mushroom. Unfortunately, it is also supposedly delicious. Hence it is often used as a poisonous cooking ingredient.

Administering as Poison: One specimen is more than sufficient to cause a painful death.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Symptoms are often delayed for eight to twelve hours. However, after that time the victim suffers from abdominal pain, watery diarrhea, and vomiting. Although these first symptoms can disappear, more serious liver damage begins to occur, and jaundice, diarrhea, delirium, seizures, and coma result. Death usually occurs 72 to 96 hours after ingestion, though some individuals have suffered for as long as six to sixteen days.

Treatment: None. However, if the toadstool can be identified immediately, induce vomiting.

Medicinal Uses: None.

C. OTHER POISONS

1. ARSENIC

Common Names: Inheritance powder.

History: Arsenic is a naturally occurring element that can be found in rock and soil. Although not naturally soluble, if mixed with a number of different salts, it can be dissolved and added to drinking water. Arsenic is often used to poison rats. Because its symptoms closely resemble those of cholera, poisoning frequently goes undetected. Hence it is often used by heirs who are impatient to inherit fortunes.

Administering as Poison: Add to food, drinking water, or disperse in the air.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Headache, dizziness, sleepiness, diarrhea, bloody urine, muscle cramps, hair loss, convulsions, kidney and liver damage, death.

Treatment: Give charcoal tablets every fifteen minutes. Long term treatment: alfalfa liquid, garlic, and selenium mixed with plant fibers to remove heavy metals from the system.

Medicinal Uses: None.

2. DEATHWATCH SPIDER

Common Names: Death spider

History: The Death Watch spider is a blood-red spider that can grow to the size of a rat. It has both fangs and a stinger; hence its poison can be delivered by bite or sting. This spider is so toxic that it must be handled with steel mesh gloves.

Administering as Poison: The clear drops of venom which drip from the deathwatch spider's stinger have been known to burn smoking holes in wood and stone. If it is impossible to place the spider near enough to the victim so that it can bite or sting, the creature can be crushed and drops of its venom and blood placed in a glass of wine.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Immediately after a victim is bitten or stung, raised red welts spread like a web around the wound. This is accompanied by a terrible burning sensation. As the poison slips through the bloodstream, the victim's blood begins to boil. Death takes only moments. If the poison is administered orally, the mouth, esophagus, and throat are seared. However, the victim dies from fume inhalation.

Treatment: None.

Medicinal Uses: None.

3. DRAGON'S SAND

Common Names: Dragon's Rage, Death Scales

History: Dragon's Sand is a pretty green sand which comes from the poisonous deserts of Grenh. It can only be collected on a day when the wind is blowing away from you, since a single breath of the fumes causes death. However, death is not instant.

Administering as Poison: Dragon's Sand is an airborne toxin. As little as one grain is adequate to kill a strong healthy man. After inhaling, the victim remains well for one to two days. However, within forty-eight hours the victim's lungs grow red hot. He burns from the inside out.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Within forty-eight hours of inhaling Dragon's Sand, the lungs grow hot, the skin begins to smoke, and the body shrivels and may burst into flame.

Treatment: None.

Medicinal Uses: None.

4. DRAGON'S BLOOD

Common Names: Blood Rot, Blood Sweat, Bleeder's Poison

History: Dragon's Blood is an extremely dangerous poison manufactured in the distant Barony of Garlan. It is clear and scentless but even the smallest drop will penetrate the skin and cause death.

Administering as Poison: Dragon's Blood is most commonly used to coat daggers and knives, but it can also be used to coat the pages of books. Since it is invisible, scentless, and tasteless, it is almost impossible to detect. However once it is administered, death is inevitable.

Symptoms of Poisoning: Almost immediately after contact with Dragon's Blood, the victim falls unconscious. When the victim wakes, he suffers extreme muscle cramps. Agonizing pain will spread throughout the body, and the victim will begin to bleed from all pores and orifices. Death takes up to two weeks.

Treatment: None.

Medicinal Uses: None. 

WRITTEN BY:

ROBIN FURTH

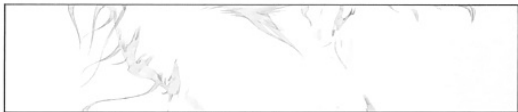
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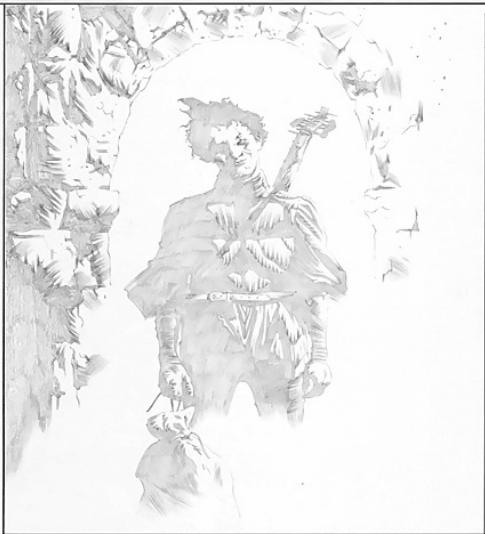
JAE LEE & JUNE CHUNG



SKETCHBOOK

Here's a look at some of Jae Lee's original penciled pages. The finished versions, painted by Richard Isanove, appeared earlier in this issue.















Newly-crowned Marvel Young Gun Daniel Acuna (THE ETERNALS, UNCANNY X-MEN) brings Gunslinger Roland Deschain to life in this stunning variant cover. His initial concept captures all of the mystery and beauty of King's fabled Mid-World.



Daniel Acuna isn't the first of Marvel's premiere artists to interpret DARK TOWER's stoic protagonist. Here's a look at some of these superstars' process art.



Gabriele del Otto



Jim Cheung



Lee Bermejo



Marko Djurdjevic



Mike Deodato Jr.



Pasqual Ferry

DARK TOWER: TALKING WITH ROBIN FURTH PT. 3

In the final part of our chat with the TREACHERY writer, she discusses her love of maps, other Marvel comics she'd like to work on, and if she'll ever escape Mid-World

By Neil Kleid

*This feature also appears on
Marvel.com*

Roland Deschain falls into the possessive grasp of Maerlyn's Grapefruit as the players of DARK TOWER: TREACHERY—Marvel Comics' third comic book series based on the novels by Stephen King—plot and scheme about him. Above them all, holding the puppet-strings alongside Peter David, Jae Lee and Richard Isanove: Robin Furth. Long before she took Roland's strings in hand, Robin documented his early adventures under the watchful eye of King.

A walking encyclopedia of Dark Tower legend and lore, Robin uses that knowledge to co-create Roland's backstory, bringing to life unwritten tales only hinted at throughout King's best-selling novels.

In the last of a three-part, in-depth interview celebrating TREACHERY, Robin expresses her love for maps and folklore, how her life has been changed by comic books, and the bonds that tie her firmly to Mid-World.

Marvel.com: Maps, of course, are fairly important to Roland's quest. I understand you originally sketched many of the maps painstakingly recre-

ated by Jim Calafiore. Is cartography a secret passion?

Robin Furth: Actually, it is! When I was a child, my grandparents had an old map of the Maine coast on the wall. In one of the map's corners there were some drawings of sea monsters, so for years I actually thought that there was a grotto of sea monsters living somewhere off the Maine coast! This thought scared me, but it also set my imagination on fire. When I got a little older, I became fascinated by the maps that appeared in fantasy novels. I would spend hours studying them and dreamt of writing novels that contained maps like those!

Marvel.com: The short folk tales you've written for the comics, fleshing out the lore and myth of the All-World, help establish a rich history that adds to the reader's enjoyment. As a writer, have you always wanted to try your hand at world building?

Robin Furth: Yes, world-building has always been an obsession of mine. Don't worry—I don't have a God complex or anything—I'm just fascinated by folklore! I spent much of my childhood reading fairytales, folktales, and any kind of mythology I could get my hands on. Later, in college, I also gobbled up a lot of anthropology texts as well as any sci-fi, fantasy, or magical realism I could find. Studying the history of English literature was also really helpful, since I realized that the world as we know it—and the cultural practices we take for granted—are far from assured. Over time, all cultures change. I've always been fascinated by the Arthurian legends and by the troubadours and the courtly love tradition, so I've tried to build some of





that into the stories I tell. As readers know, those things play a large part in the Dark Tower novels, so it makes perfect sense.

Marvel.com: If you had your way, which would you choose to write in: script or prose?

Robin Furth: Both! I really do enjoy both and have been lucky enough to do both. I'd also have to throw poetry into the mix, since that feeds a different part of the soul.

Marvel.com: You've been living in Roland's world for almost 10 years now—which of his fellows or foes do you closely identify with?

Robin Furth: Wow—that's a tough one. I definitely feel haunted by Roland. Whenever I'm working really hard on Dark Tower stuff, I feel this shadow hovering nearby. Sometimes I even look

up, certain someone has walked into the room! I've had some pretty terrifying nightmares about the Crimson King as well, always in his spider form. And I've had some pretty scary run-ins with spiders while working on the comics. Once, while I was lying in bed trying to puzzle out a scene about the nasty red king, I opened my eyes to see this *huge* spider dangling over my face! *Yikes!* It was kind of like the Crimson King was having a laugh at my expense.

Otherwise, I have to say I have a really strong affection for Cuthbert, Alain, and Susan Delgado. That was why I was so pleased that Marvel wanted to start with "Wizard and Glass"—it meant that I was able to spend time with those particular old friends, who I really felt deserved more attention. When Susan died at the end of *GUNSLINGER BORN*, I cried, despite the fact that I knew what was coming!

Marvel.com: Aside from the Dark Tow-

er books, you've worked on a LEGION OF MONSTERS comic and are now adapting the "Lords of Avalon" novels. Which other Marvel comics would you like to try your hand on?

Robin Furth: I'd love to do more with Satana and with her brother Daimon Hellstrom. I'd also love to work with Morbius, or with some of the characters who aren't as well-known, like Spellbinder—Erica Fortune. I think everybody dreams of doing things like Spider-Man or the X-Men or Fantastic Four, but there are so many great writers out there who have a lot more experience in those corners of the Marvel Universe so I think I'll continue to be an enthusiastic reader of those series! I'm a big fan of the adaptations of "Anita Blake." Those are a lot of fun! Most of all though, I'd like to be able to adapt fantasy and sci-fi novels to comic book form. I'd especially love to help bring some of the old horror and supernatural classics to life again!

Marvel.com: It's been a long road—paved with interviews, conventions and signings—since Joe Quesada

proudly announced the Dark Tower comics. How does it feel, being in the spotlight and signing at conventions?

Robin Furth: By nature I'm a fairly quiet person, so getting up in front of people is always a major event for me! As far as the success of the Dark Tower comics goes, I'm amazed and incredibly grateful that fans have enjoyed it. It's like a dream come true.

Marvel.com: Ka is like a wheel, it always comes around—do you see your life firmly entrenched in Roland's—and, by extension, Stephen's? Though you may move on to other worlds and projects, will the Dark Tower always bring you back?

Robin Furth: Mid-World definitely has a hold on me! Whenever I think that I'm moving out of Roland's domain, something happens and I find myself back in the middle of Mid-World again. I'm in the process of finishing up a novel of my own and hope to work on many more comics, but Mid-World has become one of my homes. If I left for too long, I guess I'd get homesick! **CR**



NEXT: The traitor is uncovered and an unspeakable murder committed within the halls of Gilead itself!





All is not well in Mid-World. Gunslinger Roland Deschain, the young man whose destiny it is to seek and save the Dark Tower, is haunted by horrifying visions from the evil seeing sphere, Maerlyn's Grapefruit. The Crimson King, enemy of all that lives, has long plotted the utter destruction of the Tower, and the undoing of reality itself. Now, with Roland unable to act, his monstrous foe has put his plan into motion...

From the creative team that brought Roland's early adventures to life in *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born* and *The Dark Tower: The Long Road Home*, comes the next chapter of this dark saga of friendship, betrayal and a cosmic quest as conceived by master storyteller Stephen King.

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